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CAN FREEMASONRY HELP?

We reprint herewith the first installment of an address titled "Can Freemasonry Help Us With Modern Problems?" This paper was recently delivered before the Lodge of Research No. 218, Victoria, New South Wales, by V. W. Brother J. D. Northey.

Our subject is in the form of a question which implies a search for light. With two world wars and a devastating depression within the last 30 years, there is no gainsaying the fact that, to not a few people, the lights of reason and love have failed, and so they feel that the only way out of our midnight madness is to let instinct have free play until a better day dawns. If we all followed that example, confusion would become more confounded, and the last state would be worse than the first. Such pessimism is the product of disillusioned selfishness and social despair.

As Freemasons, we know that light is not self-generated, but is transmitted by us from a source within, and yet without us. God is the Fountain Light of all our day and the Master Light of all our seeing. In His light we see light and transmit it to others by a reverent trust, which is called forth from the life of every candidate at his initiation. As we proceed in the discipline of our Craft, we are taught the value and meaning of the three emblematical lights of Freemasonry—the V.S.L., the S. and C.

A study of the liberal arts and sciences gives us insight into the marvels of nature and the operations of the mind of man.

The perspective of Freemasonry is not bounded by the grave, because it teaches us to see ourselves, and the inevitability of death over against a rational belief in the immortality of the soul.

In view of Freemasonry's effort to see life as a rounded whole—as well as to study it in sections—we feel that we can give an emphatic "Yes!" to the question which has been posed for us.

This is not to affirm that any solutions we have to offer for modern problems are foolproof in their application or automatically satisfying in their operation. The human element is an incalculable factor in all forms of thought and life. We only see in part, hence, only know in part, and so, with the best will in the world, we shall find that not a little confusion is caused by our varying degrees of insight and understanding, not to mention inherited tendencies to evil and faulty form of social environment. There is a sense in which, with each generation, life begins anew. However, we do not begin in a vacuum, but with a long racial past, and real social present.

As a demonstration is worth more than a lengthy explanation, I propose to take four modern problems—they are also ancient problems, because they rise from man's failure to adjust himself to God, to his neighbour, and to himself—and show how the teaching of Freemasonry suggests, if it does not state, their appropriate solutions.

The trouble-centres in our contemporary life are—

- (1) The clash of national sovereignties.
- (2) The class war.
- (3) Moral indifference.
- (4) Failure to find the fulfilment of life.

Their respective problems are—

- (i) The problem of peace.
- (ii) The problem of social justice.
- (iii) The problem of ethical standards.
- (iv) The problem of personality.

We shall consider each of these in turn. One's cable tow restricts one's observations on these matters.

THE CLASH OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES—THE PROBLEM OF PEACE. The causes of world wars are racial pride, national ambitions, and the desire to dominate and exploit others. For example, we have conceptions such as the master race, the chosen people, and the pioneers of the "new order." They are supported by beliefs that give a basis for a common or community life, such as blood and soil; glory of the Roman Empire; the dignity of man; and the usefulness of man. In the great reaction against capitalism, and in the search for a common bond in community life, these beliefs have been acted upon.

Among the methods by which it is proposed to implement the ideal of community life we find the totalitarian state; the omniscient state—that which is responsible for man's life in all of its departments; the non-moral state—that which is above all morality and is a law unto itself. We are familiar with these problems, which are being fought against throughout the battlefields of the world. But we must remind ourselves that world peace is like individual happiness; it is the result of right living according to God's will, revealed in the nature of man, and the constitution of the world.

Freemasonry postulates as its main belief the Fatherhood of God. It uses it in the twofold sense that we live and move and have our being in God, Who is the source of all life, and that He is a personal presence with Whom we can have spiritual relationships. The idea of "fatherhood" takes us back to the old ideal of blood relationship, but now it is more often used to stress the spiritual side of life. In our ritual the level reminds us that we are all sprung from the same stock, are partakers of the same

nature, and sharers in the same hope. The spiritual completion of the Fatherhood of God is the basic belief of Freemasons, and it is on that belief that we build our fraternity, that we seek to establish the Brotherhood of Man, which implies love and assistance.

If world peace is to be realized, it must be based on the will of God, which is the central idea of the Fatherhood of God, and we must view human nature as a great family in the making. That is a simple ideal, and it is the most suggestive. In terms of political theory and social practice it is the commonwealth idea, in which all men have the opportunity to develop their gifts and graces for the common good. However, when we stress the wider aspects of life, we must be careful not to miss the significance of nations which, like individuals, have providential roles to perform in life. As we study the development of culture, we realize that the Hebrew people had the distinct vocation of leading the world in religion and morals; the Greeks, in science and philosophy, and the Romans in law and organization. I repeat that we must be careful when we stress the Fatherhood of God and the family ideal of life, that we are not lost in colourless cosmopolitanism. I fear that there is the likelihood of that danger arising.

While we ought to strive towards the family ideal, the commonwealth conception, as Masons in our Lodges, we should not prepare blueprints or indicate the shape of things to come. Our constitution forbids politics. In a world of real peace, states will not lose their sovereignty, but they will be limited under a plan to serve the world as a whole. Particular nations must learn to look to the needs of humanity, and to work with that end in view.

(To be continued.)

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL

In 1717, a group of men endowed with a deep appreciation of the history of the human mind resolved to re-constitute a set of ceremonies and a plan of self-evolverment for men of like persuasion, based upon traditions, of organized brotherhood such as obtained in the ancient world. The basis of such old societies was a reverence for whatever conception of the Divine origins of the Universe and man might be held by the prospective member and a system of instruction founded on the minimum of dogma and a maximum of Divine awareness. As it was self-evident that plant and earth are separate and distinct manifestations, however closely associated, this group of men sought a suitable earth in which seed might safely be hidden and the plant flourish. Led by the examples of the past ages they recognized as that suitable earth an association of artisans whose craft-consciousness had for thousands of years been alive and active, that of the working

stone-masons. This association had as indelible traditions, the tenets of secrecy and fidelity, which are valuable as protective devices against argument, equivocation and misinterpretation. Upon this active organization, or to retain the simile, in this local and accessible earth of the stone-mason's guild was implanted the seed of a liberal attitude of mind, a reverent appreciation of sublime philosophy from whichever hand it came, a large understanding of men's varying concepts of spiritual truth and an insistent emphasis upon the innate brotherhood of all humanity.

Such breadth of base could favour no one ecclesiastical pattern nor accentuate one messenger to the race of divine truth as against another, but must embrace all the prophets, priests and kings of wisdom through all the sweep of human records from time immemorial. Of what concern is it that doubt may be cast upon the precise details of their personalities? Where a glow of radiance appears in ancient records about a name or a message, Freemasonry ascribes to that glow and that name a reason and a basis in truth. Whether name and doctrine became interchanged or merged is of no importance, but the fact of its marking a step forward in human apprehension is all-important. What do we really know of Noah, of Abraham, of Job, of Ezekiel, of St. John? Nevertheless, we recognize in those names great advances in spiritual or cosmogonical science. What shape or size of men were the Cabiri, the Chaldean philosophers, the pyramid-builders, the mysterious masons of Yucatan, the Druids of the misty past in Britain? We know at least that they were men, imbued with learning reverently garnered from long ages before them and that however far back we penetrate, always time reaches still further back and the human race with it. Our intelligence refuses to see in such characters a sudden rise to near-divine faculties from a background of near-animal humanity. Peaks of human understanding as they were, those peaks could only rise among supporting hills and mountains; this is basic philosophy and Freemasonry does not scorn the fruit of man's deductions.

All such radiant names in the past were consistent with our philosophy and knowledge of the process of human thought, the blossoms of a well-founded organization, the peak—intelligences of magnificent systems of belief, nurtured in secrecy, fidelity and obedience from which they emerged as perfect mediums of Divine inspiration, clear prisms of crystal, who through a cleansed mind, a body under perfect subjection and a soul no longer individual but cosmic in scope, delivered a new and fresh presentment of "what doth the Lord require of thee?"

It is a conviction of such a background behind those mighty names that moved the modern founders to revive such a system of man-building once more and in the West, where the most impressive previous examples were the sublime rites of Eleusis and of the Cymric Druids. The ill-founded aspersions and jealous antagonism of newly rising faiths may be gently ignored and the fact of

those rites being strenuously guarded and revered by the common people, steadily kept in view. Our language is crammed with scintillating crystals from those ancient philosophies and our customs and traditions and organizations reflect them to this day. It is unnecessary to give examples in this short essay but the writer could point to one book in our Masonic Library upon the subject of the Druids, into which book went the gleanings from no less than two hundred volumes, all listed at the end of a very scholarly and delightful consensus of the subject.

(W.R.M., Seven Oaks)

AREA MEETINGS

Three years ago we inaugurated a series of meetings at country points in order to test the member interest in this type of meeting. The purpose behind the plan was to create contacts between the officers of Grand Lodge and those brethren who have never attended an Annual Communication. It was thought that members residing in the Winnipeg area had a distinct advantage over our rural brethren because of the many meetings held from time to time in the metropolis. Well, the initial results fully justified the experiment and three meetings have again been arranged for 1949.

On 5th May, Strathclair Lodge will be the host lodge at a meeting in that town. The program will include a Masonic play under the auspices of The "44" Club of Winnipeg.

One week later, on 12th May, Lisgar Lodge, Selkirk, will be host. At this meeting a forum will be held and the arrangements will be under the supervision of R.W. Bro. Chas. E. Cole assisted by brethren of Assiniboine Lodge No. 7, Portage la Prairie. This area meeting is primarily arranged for the benefit of lodges situated outside the Winnipeg area. The attendance will be drawn from many country lodges other than Lisgar Lodge. Our city brethren should govern themselves accordingly because it would be unfair to impose upon the host lodge a deluge of brethren from the City thus crowding the available seating accommodation and creating discomfort to those for whom the meeting is arranged.

The third meeting will be held at Wawanesa on 20th May under the auspices of Wawanesa Lodge. The program will be directed by M.W. Bro. M. S. Donovan, P.G.M., who will provide a panel made up from the three Brandon lodges who will conduct a forum.

Need we say more? Here you will find the dates. The meetings are open to all Master Masons in good standing. Brethren who are in the vicinity of the places mentioned at the time of the meetings will be welcomed. It is urged that Worshipful Masters of lodges adjacent to the meeting places should organize their members well in advance and thus ensure representation at the appropriate area meeting.

A MASON'S PRAYER

"Great Architect" of earth and sky,
Oh Lord our God, hear Thou my cry;
From "Darkness" Thou'st brought me to "Light,"
To trust in Thee, and do the right.

"Grand Geometrician" grant anew
"Good Work" for Thee I still may do.
"Measure" my task from day to day,
"Plan" Thou my life lest I should stray.

To live an "Upright" life give power
"Square" work to do from hour to hour.
Guard this Thy servant from all evil,
That I may live upon the "Level."

Oh Thou, "Most High," may I be blessed,
To comfort those who are distressed.
Help me, that all may find in me,
True "Faith," and "Hope," and "Charity."

When I have reached life's "Setting Sun",
From life's "Hour Glass" the sands have run.
Make me, "Grand Master," in Thy Love,
A "Brother" in "Grand Lodge" above.

Note: This poem is the work of Brother Samuel Brown, Capitol Lodge No. 136. We do not have space for poetry but have made an exception because of exceptional circumstances. Our brother has been bedridden for seven years and has only recently been able to get around a little. The faith and hope expressed in this petition should be an inspiration to others less handicapped but "full of woes."

FROM THE MAIL BAG

From Halifax, N.S., a member of Prince Rupert's Lodge No. 1 writes: "Will you please convey my appreciation for such a valued pamphlet. It might be of interest to him (the editor) to know that I regularly turn my copies over to local lodges, particularly St. Andrew's Lodge No. 1, said to be the oldest in Canada. The brothers also appreciate the effort."

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A long letter from a brother of Ionic Lodge No. 25 is acknowledged. The matters discussed by him would seem suitable for action by his lodge rather than by Grand Lodge. We read and re-read his contribution but could not find a basis on which to build an item of general interest to the Craft at large. Thanks for the letter anyway.